

Book reviews

Venereology and Genitourinary Medicine. By R D Catterall, 1979. 2nd ed. Hodder and Stoughton, London. Price £3.25.

The second edition of this popular book has been rewritten to include several recent advances in the subject. It provides a comprehensive guide to the sexually transmitted diseases, their epidemiology, management, and treatment, with chapters on contact tracing and the role of the nurse, both of which are invaluable. Other non-sexually transmitted conditions affecting the genitalia are also discussed as well as the

many psychological and psychosexual problems.

It has a very useful glossary of terms and a good index. It also contains several black-and-white line drawings and graphs. In the treatment of syphilis there is a very good section on the penicillins and the diagnosis and management of reactions to them.

It is a pity that the book is spoilt by many very obvious misprints; for example syphilis is said to have first appeared in England in 1947 instead of 1497 and the word "sphygmomanometer" is spelt as "sphygmotonometer" and "heels" is spelt

"heals". There are many other misprints, and it would benefit the publishers to have the proofs thoroughly reread before the next printing. However, this book is excellent for all grades of nurses, especially those working in clinics for sexually transmitted diseases, and is a sound introduction to the subject for medical students and, indeed, doctors.

At £3.25 it is very reasonably priced and is handy to carry around in the pocket. It should be an essential addition to all nursing and medical libraries.

P K Taylor

Human Reproduction. By R W Huff and C J Pauerstein, 1979. John Wiley and Sons Ltd, New York, USA. Price £9.

This 500-page, concise and well-written book is based on the content of lectures given to undergraduates at the University of Texas Medical School and encompasses the reproductive sciences in three sections: reproductive biology, gynaecological pathophysiology, and pregnancy.

The overall content of the volume is excellent with well-judged detail in most parts, although it was disappointing to see

no mention of chlamydia or tuberculosis in the discussion of genital tract infections, whereas other infections are dealt with at length.

Illustrations might have been used more liberally at the expense of many space-wasting rambles such as, "pregnancy . . . represents a new disequilibrium state requiring a solution through maturational reorganisation . . ." Indeed, where photomicrographs do occur they are of poor quality and detract from the text.

The 24 chapters are divided into readable sections by logical subheadings, which

make the book easy to use although it may be that both undergraduates and postgraduates will be confused by the differences in definitions of such events as abortion and maternal mortality used in this book and those used in the UK. In general, the modern style of the book will please most undergraduates, who will appreciate the list of objectives at the beginning and the multiple-choice questions at the end of each chapter.

Simon G Crocker

The Love Diseases. By Paul Redfern, 1979. MacMillan Press (Papermac), London. Price £2.50.

This book is a layperson's guide to promiscuity spiced with language and comments intended to stimulate the reader and promote the sales. The author is a medically qualified freelance writer who tells us that he has "great scope and stamina for sexual intercourse." This experience enables him to dispense advice, such as "the trick is to keep yourself in shape sexually with masturbation" and "much better to screw around than become a withdrawn wet." The book is laid out under a list of entries in alphabetical order from "abortion" to "where to look." Several line drawings and numerous quotations appear on the left hand pages, including John Donne, Boswell, Mae West, Phillip (*Portnoy's Complaint*) Roth, and some distinguished colleagues in the specialty. From a medical standpoint the

text is substantially accurate and commendably up to date, thanks to Dr Anthony Wisdom, who contributes a foreword, but a number of important errors have appeared.

There is reference to cystitis as a complication of gonorrhoea in the male (p 62), which must be extremely rare, but no mention that it can be symptomless—of vital importance in a highly promiscuous male. To state that, "the alcohol restriction is unnecessary" as part of the management (p 64) is at the very least unhelpful, bearing in mind the increasing prevalence of postgonococcal urethritis and the depressing problem of relapsing non-specific urethritis. Hepatitis B infection (especially in its chronic form) may destroy the liver, but the reader is told only that it "may be . . . so mild that the patient isn't ill enough to go to the doctor," which is irresponsible (p 69). Moreover, swallowing semen is not the common factor in its spread. Cytarabine is a powerful cytotoxic,

certainly not used for superficial herpetic infection, and the recommendation to get an injection at the onset of symptoms is ludicrous (p 71). Advice to visit the clinic before further sexual contact with one's wife, husband, or friend if "you've had one of the locals while away" (p 106) is more likely to engender a false sense of security, since diagnosis of incubating infection is not possible. In other words, there really is no substitute for a period of sexual abstinence to ensure that nothing will be passed on, however unpalatable that may be, and attending a clinic will not alter the fact.

The Love Diseases was written for people in their late teens to help them cope better with the vicissitudes of love and sex, but in some respects it may well compound their problems, not least by transmitting the author's obsession with sexual excess.

B A Evans